MONTEREY NEWS

May 2008
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The Town

This month's report was compiled by the editor from the minutes of the March 29th Select Board meeting taken by Inter-Departmental Secretary Melissa Noe and notes taken at the April 14th meeting by new town reporter Sue Protheroe. There were no notes or available minutes for the April 7th meeting, and there was no meeting on April 21. Much of the activity at Town hall this month was preparation for the May 3rd Annual Town Meeting. Warrant articles for the meeting are listed following this article.

The Monterey School

On March 31, Valerie Spriggs, Southern Berkshire Regional School District Superintendent, met with the Select Board to discuss school issues (Linda Thorpe and Deborah Mielke, Monterey's represemtative on the School Committee, were also present for the discussion).

Ballots will be needed for the citizen's petition on the upcoming town meeting warrants regarding changing the School Committee membership from appointed to elected. The petition [article 29 on Monterey warrant] will be brought before the Town Meetings of all five member towns of the district. Town Counsel was contacted to advise the Board on who is responsible for getting the ballots printed.

The letter from the School Committee to the Town requesting that the Town place an article on the Town Meeting warrant to close the Monterey School due to a projected low student enrollment for kindergarteners in Monterey (3 children are on the census) was discussed. The Select Board expressed concern about the lack of publicity from the district promoting enrollment in the Monterey School. Superintendent Spriggs said that the Monterey School has not sustained enrollment that can justify continuing as the other off campus schools have (New Marlborough and Egremont). The Select Board also voiced its concern about the School Committee not following through on Monterey's requests to amend the district agreement. Spriggs said she was not there to talk politics but to express her concern at the dangerously low enrollment numbers for the Monterey School. The Select Board asked what happened with the option of making Monterey a K-1 to increase the enrollment and why no one has looked into going back to the way it had been with the kindergarten being in Monterey and New Marlborough starting at 1st grade, rather than having a kindergarten at both schools.

Deborah Mielke said that, given the economics, several School Committee members would be happy to have the Monterey School shut down since the estimated cost savings would benefit the other towns. She also said that parents in Monterey say they want to keep the school open but then choice their own children out. There is a larger issue that needs to be addressed.

Linda Thorpe added that she has heard firsthand that the Mill River School discourages parents from

Town meeting? Crow and bald eagle (photo by Stephen Rose).

sending their children to Monterey because they felt the transition the following year would be difficult for the children. Thorpe felt that if the district went back to having Monterey as the kindergarten and New Marlborough starting at first grade this issue would be resolved.

Jon Sylbert asked if a program would still be cut at Undermountain if the Monterey School were to be closed. Spriggs confirmed that this would be the case and that it would mean approximately $120,000 savings in personnel. The Board questioned the amount.

Valerie Spriggs (who is resigning as superintendent and leaving the district as of June 1) agreed to publicize open enrollment for the Monterey School. She also confirmed that she has a contractual obligation to notify the teachers by a specific date whether they will be laid off or not due to cutbacks and/or campus closings/restructuring.

The Board decided to place an article on the Town Meeting warrant [it is article 6] to see if the Town will agree to close the Monterey School, so that the voters will have a chance to discuss the issue. A similar article will be on the Town Meeting warrants of the other four member town of SBRSD, but all five towns must agree before the school can be closed.

At the request of the Select Board, Bob Gauthier reported at the April 14th meeting that the school building and grounds were deeded to the Town in two segments. In 1863 the house and land was sold by the Langdon family to the Town of Monterey, School District 2, for twenty-five dollars. In 1877 the playground adjacent to the school was sold to the Town of Monterey by Albert and Florida Tryon for one dollar. The combined land that the school now sits on is .29 acres, and is owned by the Town of Monterey.

The Western Mass Regional School District was the first regular school district in the state of Massachusetts.

Lake Garfield

The Select Board discussed the special article requesting funds [article 18, requesting $4,000] for a survey to be performed of the Town Beach area to determine the actual property lines and ownership. The Board suggested having the Boat Ramp Committee review the proposal and present it at Town Meeting.

Dean Amidon, Assistant Harbor Master, reported that the barrier rope around the Town Beach swimming area at Lake Garfield will be strung so that it avoids the boat ramp, in case boats have to be removed on an emergency basis.

Correction

Due to incorrect information received by the Select Board, the town news section of the April *Monterey News* incorrectly stated that the new owners of the former Kinne's Grove property were willing to work on a case-by-case basis with residents seeking boat ramp access to Lake Garfield this summer. The new owners, the Mandelbaums, have informed us that this is not the case and that in fact the boat ramp had to be removed because of its poor condition and insurance problems, so no lake access is possible there.

The Monterey Select Board and the editor of the *Monterey News* regret the mistake. Everyone please take note so that we respect the privacy of our good neighbors the Mandelbaums.

Julio Rodriguez of the Friends of Lake Garfield presented a letter to the Select Board requesting the allocation of $2,500 toward LakeFest expenses and the health of the lake. The Board confirmed that this has already been placed on the Town Meeting Warrant (article 16). Pat and Julio Rodriguez also notified the Board that LakeFest will be held on August 16 and that currently no fireworks are planned, as they are not in the budget.

The *Monterey News* is published monthly under the auspices of Monterey United Church of Christ, Monterey, MA 01245.

Lake Buel

Kyle Pierce presented the Board with a citizen petition for the Town Meeting warrant [article 28] requesting $10,000 to help fund some engineering studies on how to prevent the flooding, a big problem for residents along the lakeshore. She confirmed that the outlet for Lake Buel is located in New Marlborough, and a similar article is being placed on their Town Meeting warrant.

The Board discussed the letter to be written to the Access Board regarding placing porta potties at the Lake Buel boat ramp.

On the Roads

Director of Operations Maynard Forbes provided the Board with a doctor's note allowing him to return to work with restrictions. [Forbes broke his arm badly earlier this year after slipping on the ice. Keep on trucking, Maynard—but best to stay in the truck.]

Some salt shed history: Forbes provided the Board with a letter written to the Town in June of 1986 stating that the request for a chemical building was being forwarded to the Boston DPW office. The letter was written by Dean Amidon, District Highway Engineer, to Donald Amstead, Monterey Highway Superintendent. Boston replied that Monterey's salt usage was too low to warrant funding a salt shed.

The Board reviewed the Highway Department's request for two new trucks and the amount to be borrowed. Forbes is researching the trade-in values of the trucks to be replaced. [See articles 14 and 15 on the Town Meeting warrant.]

The contract for the Transfer Station will go out to bid in May. Forbes is reviewing the procedures, cost, and other miscellaneous items for the Transfer Station in FY09. After a lengthy discussion of the transfer station fees at the April 14th meeting, it was decided to leave the fee the same, at $35, but to remove the additional cash fees for bulky objects, effective July 31st.

The Town is accepting bids to resurface Curtis Road.. An application for $500,000 to repair Route 23 will be filed with STRAP (Small Town Road Assistance Program) This state grant is limited to towns under 3500 population, and does not have to be repaid. [See article 24 on warrant.]

Joe Baker

Instructor Wendy Jensen (l) gives pointers to Heidi Stucker at March 15th Cultural Council basketry workshop.

Building Issues

The Select Board and Building Commissioner Donald Torrico met with Electrical Inspector Nick Fredsall to address a recent complaint received about his not responding to inspection requests in a reasonable time. Fredsall said that it is very expensive to drive out to Monterey so he tries to group the inspections, and sometimes that means responding later than three days from the request. He suggested that the Town raise the inspection fee from $40/per visit to $50/per visit. The Select Board asked him to provide the number of inspections performed in the last two years.

Torrico reported that he did a drive-through inspection at the KSAMass property (formerly Seven Stones) and found that work had been started on several cabins without permits. He issued five stop work orders and has asked the owners/contractor to meet with him.

And Finally . . .

The Select Board reviewed copies of the sixth grade essays from the school's recent essay contest.

Memorial Day Events
Monday, May 26

11 a.m.
Service for Veterans
Veterans Memorial Park
Route 23 at Blue Hill Road.
Everyone is invited to attend to honor all veterans.

1 p.m.
Parade in center of town.
Refreshments and fellowship to follow at the Firehouse.

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Town Meeting Warrant

The Annual Town Meeting will be held on May 3 beginning at 9:30 a.m. at the Monterey Firehouse. A Special Town Meeting will precede it at 9:15 a.m., which has only one article: the request to transfer $34,852 from Free Cash to pay the additional costs of the school operating budget using the statutory method of assessment, as required by the state.

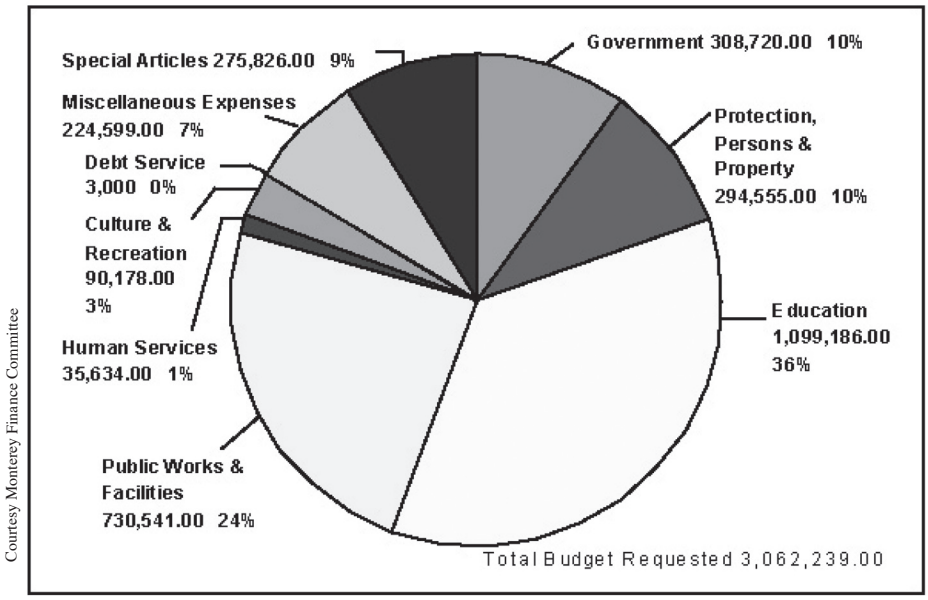
For exact wording of the articles on the warrant, refer to the printed warrant that was mailed to citizens or to the town web site. Article 1 is the election of town officers. Only one position is being contested, a five-year seat on the Board of Appeals: Fred Chapman (D) is vying with Richard Piepho (R) for the seat.

Article 2 is a request for the town to exempt from Proposition $2^1/_2$ the amount to pay the bond for purchasing town trucks.

Article 3 is the reports of town officers and committees.

Article 4 would set the salaries for elected officials.

Article 5 is the big one, the town budget request for FY09. Refer to the warrant for the exact numbers. The FY09 total requested is $3,062,239, an increase of $199,697 (7 percent) over the FY08 budget of $2,862,542. This total includes the requests in the special articles listed below, which total $275,826. As always, the school operating budget is the largest item at $929,017. See the pie chart above for how the budget breaks down.


Special Articles 275,826.00 9%
Government 308,720.00 10%
Miscellaneous Expenses 224,599.00 7%
Protection, Persons & Property 294,555.00 10%
Debt Service 3,000 0%
Culture & Recreation 90,178.00 3%
Education 1,099,186.00 36%
Human Services 35,634.00 1%
Public Works & Facilities 730,541.00 24%
Total Budget Requested 3,062,239.00
Courtesy Monterey Finance Committee

Special Articles

Article 6: Discontinue the operation of the Monterey School.

Article 7: Appropriate $62,626 for the loan and interest on the Osh Kosh truck and Ford 550 truck.

Article 8: Appropriate $50,000 for the Stabilization Fund.

Article 9: Transfer $10,000 from Overlay Surplus to the Reserve Fund.

Article 10: Appropriate $3,200 for repairs and maintenance of Bally Gally.

Article 11: Appropriate $2,000 to be deposited in a Stabilization Fund for the Retiree Health and Life Insurance.

Article 12: Appropriate $5,000 from the Receipts Reserve Septic Loan Fund for the Community Septic Loan Program.

Article 13: Appropriate $175,000 to purchase a new single axle dump truck and sander and associated equipment.

Article 14: Appropriate $32,000 to purchase a new ¾ ton pickup and snowplow.

Article 15: Authorize and direct the Assessors to transfer $150,000 from Free Cash to reduce the tax levy.

Article 16: Appropriate $2,500 for LakeFest.

Article 17: Appropriate $7,000 to replace playground equipment.

Article 18: Appropriate $4,000 to survey Town Beach and surrounding property.

Article 19: Transfer from stabilization $42,500 to extend the Corashire Cemetery road.

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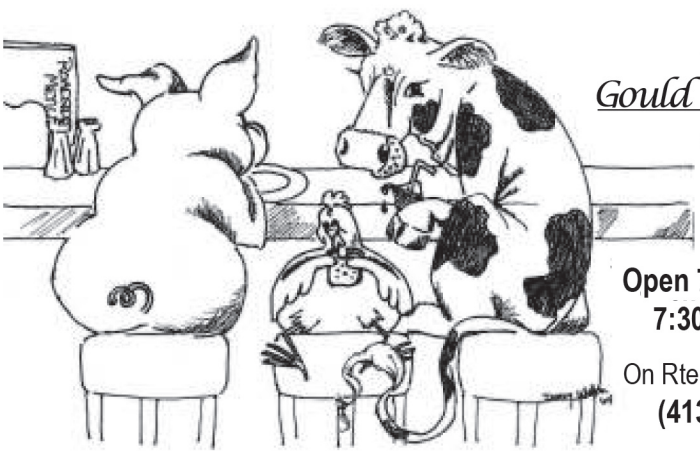

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Article 20: Appropriate $12,000 to paint the Town Library.

Article 21: Appropriate $35,000 to purchase new turnout gear (PPE) for the Fire Department.

Article 22: Appropriate $27,000 to purchase a new police cruiser.

Article 23: Appropriate $3,000 to create a master plan for the Town.

Article 24: Authorize the Treasurer to borrow $500,000 to pave Main Road, aka Route 23 (contingent on approval of the STRAP GRANT from the Commonwealth).

Article 25: Amend Article VII Section 4. Holiday Policy of the Town Bylaws.

Article 26: Amend the zoning bylaws of the Town by adding a common driveway bylaw.

Article 27: Accept the Citizen Petition to elect Southern Berkshire Regional School District School Committee members with residency requirements in district-wide elections.

Article 28: Accept the Citizen Petition to appropriate the sum of $10,000 to the Lake Buel Watershed Committee.

Article 29: Excavation and Trench Safety Permitting Authority.

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What's New at the Monterey General Store

We've made it through another Berkshire winter and as someone said in the store last week, "We may be worn down, but we're far from worn out." I'd like to share with you some of the changes ahead for the General Store. Over the past few years many of you have suggested that we develop a more "sit-down" full meal offering at the store. With this in mind Chef Nancy Lee will be opening "The Tea Room at the Monterey General Store."

Nancy has been cooking and teaching professionally for thirty years, including opening and running the Phoenix Café in neighboring Columbia County. She has also developed an herbal product line, Inner Essence, that we will be carrying at the store. Last year she bought a house in Monterey and moved here with her daughter. She has been looking for the right avenue for her many talents, and we're excited about the creativity and talent she will bring to the store.

The Tea Room will be a place to savor the food, relax alone or with friends in an unrushed atmosphere, leave everything behind and just be in the moment … The menu will be constantly changing, including soups, salads, multicultural dishes, and an assortment of naturally sweetened cakes, cookies, candies and exceptional teas.

Everything will be made in the store with an emphasis on organic and locally grown items. There will also be a pre-order catering menu offering items not on the Tea Room menu.

All of this will be added to the existing store format. Our deli and sandwich menu will still be available for take out and eat-in.

Stop in and learn more. We will be opening the Tea Room on Friday, May16. It will be open every Friday and Saturday from 9:00 a.m. until 7:00 p.m. and Sunday from 9:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m.

— Kenn Basler

Poetry Slam at Monterey Library May 10

Calling all poets—all are welcome to perform their original works at the Monterey Library Poetry Slam on Saturday, May 10, at 7 p.m. Poets should arrive at 6:30 to register as there are a limited number of slots for performances! This is a truly exciting event. We are grateful to the following for providing very nice prizes for the winners: the Monterey General Store will have a gift basket; Ellen Grenadier is donating a mug from her pottery; Mike and Maureen Banner are donating a very nice silver bookmark; Del Martin will also be donating a prize; and the Bookloft will be donating a certificate toward the cost of publishing your own book that will make it possible to print and bind 10 copies for only $85! If you'd like to know more about poetry slams, just google the term—there is a lot of information out there. It is a participatory event for the audience as well—five people will be chosen to be the judges! The top three performers will go on to the Eric Carle Museum to compete against the winners from other libraries in a final round later in May. Please encourage any poets you know to come and bring their cheering section! See you there and bring your best poem!

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Informational Meeting on Community Preservation Act

In 2000, Massachusetts adopted the Community Preservation Act, which allows towns to impose a surcharge on local property taxes to enhance programs devoted to open space and recreation, historic preservation, and affordable housing. Since the law's inception, 127 towns throughout the commonwealth, or 1/3 of the towns statewide, have adopted a local Community Preservation Act (CPA), and are receiving matching funds for the state for a wide variety of worthwhile programs.

Three communities in the Berkshires—Williamstown, Stockbridge, and Lenox—have passed the necessary legislation and are receiving funds for their preferred programs. Becket is trying to get a CPA passed in this year's town meeting. Monterey has a good chance of becoming the fourth or fifth Berkshire community to lock in the wisdom of the program for the good of our town.

On Tuesday, May 20, 2008, the Monterey Preservation Land Trust is hosting an educational forum on the CPA for Monterey residents at Town Hall. The moderator will be Wendy Sweetser, Director of Highland Communities Initiatives, a project of The Trustees of Reservations. Other speakers include Marilyn Wightman, president of the board of Construct, and Roscoe Sandlin, chairman of the CPA in Lenox.

The CPA allows the community to impose a surcharge of up to 3 percent of the property tax for each homeowner. While this does represent an increase in what homeowners pay, the surcharge is modest in scope and reaps thousands of dollars for community projects.

Each year 30 percent of the funds raised by the town for its CPA, and funds awarded to the towns by the state, must be spent or allocated so that 10 percent goes to each of the CPA's goals—open space and recreation, historic preservation, and affordable housing. The remaining 70 percent can be spent or allocated as desired to the CPA's three goals.

Although state law allows for a surcharge of up to 3 percent of the property tax, exceptions are allowed. For example, a town can exempt the first $100,000 of tax valuation, thereby reducing the surcharge. Towns can also exempt low-income taxpayers and low- and middle-income seniors from the surcharge. And although towns can impose the full 3 percent surcharge, many choose to use a lower percentage even though that, of course, lowers the contribution by the state.

The state's funds for this act come from a tax imposed on real estate deals and is collected by the Registry of Deeds on all housing sales. Since September 14, 2000, when the CPA went into effect, the state has matched funds raised by each town dollar for dollar. In FY 2007, the state had $68.1 million in the account specifically for CPA matching funds.

Please join us at Town Hall on Tuesday, May 20, at 7:00 p.m. for this informative meeting. We hope that Monterey becomes the fourth or fifth town in the Berkshires to pass a Community Preservation Act that will cost us very little and gain us a great deal.

— Laury Epstein

Daffodil Days

Daffodil Days was a great success again this year, thanks to the hard work and commitment by our many local volunteers. This year Monterey was third in Berkshire County for sales at $1,375. A special thanks to all of you who take time from your busy day to make calls for orders and to Kenn at the Monterey General Store for storing, distributing, and collecting money for the daffodil drive. Your participation brightens the lives of so many people around us, while giving hope to those struggling with and searching for a cure for cancer.

— Pat Mielke

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Monterey Cultural Council Awards 22 Grants

Every year Monterey receives its share of funds from the Massachusetts Cultural Council, as does every town and city in the commonwealth as part of the Local Cultural Council Program (LCC). This year the program allotted the Monterey Cultural Council $5,345 to give grants in the arts, humanities, and sciences to individuals, schools, and cultural organizations of its choosing. The volunteers on the Council awarded 22 grants to 20 recipients for calendar year 2008, ranging from $100 to $550:

Barrington Stage Company (Kids Act), **Bazaar Productions** (Berkshire Fringe), **Berkshire Bach Society** (Student tickets), **Berkshire Children's Chorus** (Scholarships), **Berkshire County Kidsville News**, **Berkshire Theater Festival, Inc**., **Bidwell House Museum** (Sacred Harp Concert), **Castle Hill Theatre Company** (The Selfish Giant), **Community Access to the Arts** (CATA Annual Performance Passport Program), **Flying Cloud Institute** (After School Arts and Sciences; Berkshire Environmental Educators Network), **IS 183 Art School of the Berkshires** (Making Art Together), **Wendy Jensen** Basketmaking Workshop, **Adrienne Lederman** Printmaking Workshop, **Gregory Maichack** Art of Pastell II, **Monterey General Store** (Local Singer/Songwriter Project), **Monterey Public Library** (children's summer performances; Youth Book Discussion Group), **Sandisfield Arts Center** Youth and Family Programs, **Sculpture Now** (SculptureNow in the Village), **Shakespeare & Company** (Fall Festival), **Southern Berkshire Regional School District** (Mayflower II/Plymoth Plantation).

Funds allotted by the town and contributions made to the Council's ubiquitous donation jar pay for other things as well, such as the birding lecture and nature walk scheduled this spring (see article this page), concerts and poetry readings, and annual Labor Day or Memorial Day weekend events. The Council is always happy to hear from Monterey residents about event ideas for the months ahead.

Cultural Council Events

This month Monterey will welcome birder Rich Guthrie of WAMC's *Vox Pop* fame. He will speak on Friday evening, May 23, at 7 p.m. at the Meetinghouse and will lead a birding hike the next morning, Saturday, May 24. Everyone is welcome to attend the lecture, but the number of participants in the hike will be limited, so please call to preregister for that event (Joe Baker 528-5134).

Joe Baker

Gregory Maichack gives pointers to Katherine Roberts at Cultural Council's April 18th pastel workshop.

Rich Guthrie has been a birder since childhood and a bird bander for more than thirty years. He has also been a member of the Cornell University team in search of the ivory-billed woodpecker in Arkansas, and in 2007 became one of the few people in recent times to actually spot one. Put Rich Guthrie on your calendar and watch for posters and other publicity for the exact time and title of his lecture.

Nothing is more beautiful than the Berkshires in early June, so you won't want to miss Bonner McAllister's nature walk June 8 on the Monterey Land Trust property on Mt. Hunger Road. The hike begins at 10:30 a.m. and, as participation will be limited to 12 people, preregistration is required. Call Bonner at 528-9385 if you wish to attend or have questions about the hike.

The Council also has plans in the works for a printmaking workshop in August with Adrienne Lederman, a poetry reading, our traditional Labor Day event and potluck picnic, and more. Watch the *News* for details as they are finalized.

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Our Veterans Memorial Park

Early in the 1990s the Monterey Select Board appointed a Veterans Memorial Committee to look into the WW II Memorial board outside of the town hall and the WW I Memorial Bronze Plaque on the rock in front of the library. The committee consisted of Dean Amidon, Frank D'Amato, Art Hastedt, Arnold Hayes, Gige O'Connell, and Ray Tryon. Art Hastedt and Dean Amidon were elected co-chairmen. The WW II Memorial board listed all WW II veterans from Monterey and long-term summer residents. The WW I Memorial in front of the library also listed Monterey vets and some summer residents.

After many meetings it was decided to undertake a massive project of listing all Monterey residents and long-term summer residents who served in all the wars from the Revolutionary War through the Vietnam War. This was a grand idea but involved a great deal of research and history. With the help of Arnold Hayes, who was the veterans service officer for the area, Linda Thorpe, who is very knowledgeable about townspeople over the years, Ray Tryon, Monterey's unofficial historian, and many others, including our committee members, we succeeded in producing all of those names. IT WASN'T EASY!

The next step was to choose a place to list these names and an honorable way to display them. The town, wisely, had just purchased a plot of land along Blue Hill Road for a future extension of Corashire Cemetery. At a town meeting, the town generously donated a parcel on the corner of Blue Hill Road and Route 23 for use as a Veterans Memorial Park.

In the meantime, Art Hastedt moved, leaving Dean Amidon as chairman.

Frank D'Amato and Edith Wilson, two of our fine town artists, submitted sketches of the proposed park and monuments. After careful thought, we chose Frank's design, showing tall, narrow, square monuments with room enough to include many names on each of the four sides. These were elevated on top of a gentle slope for better exposure, and they certainly are impressive. Paul Arienti, a Great Barrington veteran and owner of a business of memorial stones, suggested a dark Italian Impala polished granite stone for these vertical steles. In addition, we designated a matching normal shaped stone to be placed facing the traffic on Rte. 23 with the name of the new park and a dedication date of July 4, 1997, inscribed on the front.

Needless to say, these heavy stones required a deep and strong foundation to support them. Local contractors provided the labor, equipment, and material to install the foundations. Leigh Tryon and Phil Newey were the generous donors. There were so many names that three steles were required, and it's amazing that Paul Arienti inscribed those hundreds of names perfectly.

In addition a large flagpole was donated by Arnie Hayes, and an appropriate light for night viewing was installed. Ray Tryon suggested that the Monterey Fire Department acquire and maintain the light. Our local electrician, Ray Bertelli, provided the expertise to install the light, and he and the Fire Department maintain them to this day.

The next step was to raise the funds for the memorial. A fund drive, mainly through the *Monterey News,* began immediately, and approximately $35,000 was raised to complete the project. The friends and residents of Monterey were very generous in donating amounts from ten dollars to five thousand dollars.

The Cemetery Committee maintains the park as part of their responsibility.

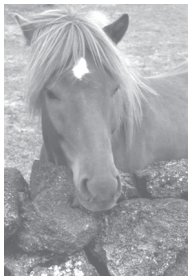
After the 9/11 terrorist attack on the Twin Towers, the Monterey Memorial Veterans Committee decided to install a flagpole in front of the town hall with a plaque dedicating the flag to all of those who lost their lives in that attack on the United States. The plaque was lost during the recent renovations of the town hall, but our committee plans to replace it.

Our committee urges the younger veterans in town to continue adding names of veterans from wars since Vietnam to the beautiful park in a similar manner.

We thank Arnie Hayes and Allan Dean for providing ceremonial music and Leroy Thorpe for organizing the participating veterans over all these years.

A dedication was held on July 4, 1997, and every Memorial Day since a service has been held in the park in memory of ALL veterans, especially Montereyans.

— Monterey Veterans Memorial Com.



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Local Potash History at May 14 Community Dinner

At April's potluck dinner, we were thrilled to listen to the Chord Sharks, the award-winning barbershop quartet. All who attended were appreciative, and we hope the group will come again next year, but without the Valentine's Day snowstorm and cancellation!

For the final potluck of the season, we have a special treat for those of us interested in the history of our region. What do you know about potash? Did you know it was the primary driving force for colonial expansion into the virgin forests of New England?

For this month's Monterey potluck dinner, we are very excited to have Ralmon Jon Black from the Williamsburg Historical Commission, speaking on "Asheries and Potash: the first and most profitable business, bringing the first settlers to Monterey—a local history, unrecorded and forgotten." Please see accompanying article.

The potluck dinner will be held on Wednesday, May 14, at 6 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall of the Monterey Meetinghouse. Please bring a dish to share with a serving utensil and a place setting for yourself. All are welcome.

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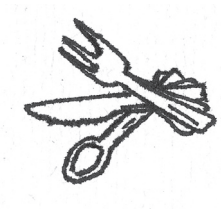

Potash Industry in Monterey

In 1750, the growing textile industry in Europe desired thousands of tons of carbonate of potash for making soap and bleach. Britain, on the verge of taking control of most of North America as the French and Indian War ended, saw the hardwood forests as an enormous resource of this substance. As they sought to exploit this great wealth, information was disseminated and incentives offered, and quite suddenly the potash business started off everywhere, almost at once.

Conditions were right for colonial expansion into the impenetrable virgin woodlands of New England. The early settlement in and around what is now Monterey is, mostly, only remembered for its sawmills. Perhaps when the Reverend Adonijah Bidwell arrived in 1750 to be the first minister of Township No. 1, the potash industry had not quite begun. It was starting up in Boston and other port cities, and surely it came to thrive in the Berkshires, commencing before the district of Tyringham was chartered. Potash was money, black silver, when there was little specie to be had anywhere.

Potash became a farm and home industry that all people could prosper from; they could not afford to ignore it. It quickly returned on land investment, paid the taxes, encouraged road construction, and financed homes, mills, and stores. It was a dangerous, dirty, and entirely unpleasant occupation, which, when the land was cleared, fell into desuetude, went sparsely recorded, and could not soon enough be forgotten.

— Ralmon Jon Black

Transfer Station Sticker Renewal

The time to renew your transfer station sticker for Fiscal Year 09 (July 1, 2008–June 30, 2009) has arrived. For your convenience we are again offering to mail you your sticker(s); to take advantage of this option please go to www.montereyma.gov then click on "Town Government and Departments" and then on "Transfer Station" to print off an application and instructions. Renewal reminders will be mailed to everyone who purchased a sticker in Fiscal Year 08 and had a legible address on the application. If you prefer to purchase your sticker(s) in person, you may do so at the Town Hall, Monday 12:30–4 p.m. and Tuesday–Friday 8:30 a.m.–4:00 p.m. Stickers will not be sold at the transfer station.

Each household is allowed two stickers; license plate numbers and the state of issue must be provided. The Town Bylaws state that all households in Monterey must purchase a transfer station sticker. Private haulers will need to provide a list with the 911 addresses of all households they pick up for, and those residents will also have to have a current sticker. Nonprofits and summer camps are on a per case basis with the town and should contact Maynard Forbes, Transfer Station Manager, for more information.

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Are You a Friend of Lake Garfield?

How fortunate we are in Monterey to have such a jewel of a lake. It gives us an endless array of beautiful scenes, season after season. It gives us countless opportunities for fun and recreation. It adds value to all the homes in Monterey.

I am writing to ask you to become a member of the Friends of Lake Garfield (FLG) and to join us in our mission: to protect and preserve Lake Garfield for the enjoyment of all in Monterey. Your $35 membership goes a long way. Join at the Special Friend level for $50, or the Very Special Friend level for $100, and the money goes even further. We put dues to work on such projects as …

1. Managing Drawdown: the most efficient, chemical-free way to prevent excess weeds from owning our shorelines. In 2007, FLG achieved a longtime goal, partnered with our town and the Conservation Commission. We assisted in obtaining a respected scientist, Dr. Ken Wagner, to prepare the next Notice of Intent to the Commonwealth. This allows the drawdown to be managed according to the best principles of lake science for the health of Lake Garfield. The bulk of our dues will go to sustain this effort.

2. Additional Weed Control: We stocked the lake with a type of weevil that has a voracious appetite for milfoil, a weed that was choking our ecosystem. It worked wonders! Milfoil no longer poses a serious threat.

3: Weed Control on the Shores: With matching funds from the town, we're conducting a three-year insecticide-free test to control purple loosestrife, a weed that takes over shorelines in such great profusion that nothing else can grow.

4. Water testing: Three times each year, along with Lake Steward, Dr. J. Phillips of LAPA West, we test the waters of Lake Garfield for phosphates, oxygen levels, temperature, and other measurements that monitor the health of the lake.

5. And don't forget LakeFest, launched by the Friends of Lake Garfield to bring us all together for a joyous day on our wondrous lake. (We've no budget for fireworks this year. Is there an angel out there with $6,000? You'd get a lot of bang for your buck!) LakeFest will be Saturday, August 16. Write it down. (Rain date is the 17th, but don't even think about it!) And while you're writing, jot down the dates of our summer meetings: June 1, July 6, and August 3 at 9:30 a.m. at the Firehouse.

Please go to www.LakeGarfield.org for membership info, or send your name, address, and telephone number to Friends of Lake Garfield, Box 355, Monterey, MA, along with a check for $35. Or join as a Special Friend for $50, or a Very Special Friend for $100. Lake Garfield needs all the friends we can get.

— Julio Rodriguez, President, FLG

Bidwell House Internships

Berkshire Bank has awarded the Bidwell House Museum a $1,000 grant to fund an upper high school or college student in a summer internship in Museum Studies. The program will provide a $1,000 stipend for the recipient to work at the museum in July and August. The education grant is one of four available for the summer of 2008; also funded is a $500 grant for a high school student for summer work and two $200 internships for a two-week introduction to colonial history from the venue of a historic 1750 home.

Interns will shadow experienced docents for several days and interact with the staff in discussions of colonial lifeways in the Berkshires. The Bidwell House is a colonial museum that uses the history of the house and its 200 acres of land to re-create the demographics, economics, political and military history, and daily life of early settlers to the region. Interns will be introduced to colonial architecture, cataloging, exhibitions, marketing, public relations, and fund-raising for nonprofits. All interns will give tours of the museum and represent the Bidwell House in all aspects of museum life.

A summer internship for a college student or upper high school student will include an opportunity to learn nonprofit management skills and/or development of electronic marketing. Participants in

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Conservation/Preservation/ Restoration

the program will work with the director in establishing fulfillment of career interests. High school interns will receive guests, learn museum software, collect fees, and learn the fundamentals of conservation.

The museum opens the last weekend of May and will be open through the summer from Thursdays to Mondays, 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.; special programs on Saturdays begin at 10:00 a.m. High school volunteers are always needed to work in the heirloom vegetable and flower gardens. Participants in garden work will be encouraged to create their own time schedule and work with a volunteer staff called the "Garden Angels" toward fulfillment of school and church volunteer work. Volunteer docents of all ages are always welcome.

To apply, please call the museum and leave name, address, high school or college affiliation and telephone number; application forms will be sent out immediately and are due at the Bidwell House by May 14. Mail applications to the museum at Box 537, 100 Art School Road, Monterey, MA 01245. For more information or to receive an application, call 413-528-6888.

An interview will be required for finalists; applicants under 18 must have parental or guardian permission. Transportation to the museum must be provided by the interns. Announcement of students selected for the internship will be made on May 21.

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Monterey Library Notes
Videos, Summer Programs, Museum Passes

Thank you to all who contributed to the library in memory of librarian Anne Marie Makuc. We put most of it into our book fund, and the results can be found on the shelves of the library. We finally were able to install the outdoor bench that the rest of the money went toward. It is located behind the library and overlooks the Konkapot. Sit and enjoy the falls while you read your favorite book!

CWMARS will keep us on top of all the latest technological advances in the way libraries serve their patrons—and the latest announcement is that CWMARS just bought a subscription that allows its patrons (that's US!) to download any of 284 PBS videos. They are available on the CWMARS digital books site (http://digitalcatalog.cwmars.org). Amazing to think you won't even have to come to the library to see quality videos. A number of people already had CWMARS cards from other libraries, but we have found that the other libraries hadn't explained all the benefits of CWMARS. Please come in and ask about how we can help you enjoy being a member of this user friendly automated lending system.

We've been planning our summer programs for a while now. Of course we start the children's reading program on Saturday, July 5, at 10:30 a.m. with a return visit by Greg McAdams, last year's wildly popular magician. Look for something for the kids to do Saturday mornings in July and into August. The new mood pencils for this year's summer reading program are in! Check them out while supplies last! We will also have some more writers from the Sisters in Crime organization, who will speak on a topic about mystery writing on Monday July 14, at 7 p.m. Our annual book sale, which provides much of the funding for these programs, will be the last Saturday in July—look at our page on the town's website to see the Trustee s' policy on donations to the book sale.

The most recent addition to our museum pass program is Ventfort Hall in Lenox. Go visit a real mansion from the Gilded Age. We also have a discount pass for Mystic Aquarium in Connecticut—a long drive, but a great aquarium, and with the cost of gas the discount will help. Those passes join the others we have had previously—The Bidwell House, Norman Rockwell, Hancock Shaker Village, The Berkshire Museum, Mass MOCA, The Clark Art Institute; and if they are still open, we hope to have The Mount. We also have a pass for parking at the various Massachusetts state parks (including Beartown State Forest and York Lake). You may borrow a pass just like a book, and they give you either free or discounted admission to the attraction, as well as discounts at the gift shops in some cases.

— Mark Makuc, Library Director

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Sacred Harp Singing Opens Bidwell House Season

"There's nothing like a cracking good shape note sing," says Peter Amidon (photo), who will be leading eight singers at the Early New England Music Concert, the opening event of the Bidwell House Museum season on Saturday, May 31, at the Monterey United Church. The 2:00 p.m. singing workshop will be followed by a 4:00 p.m. concert. Harmony singing has been a huge part of Peter's family's career and life, and "Sacred Harp" singing is one of the basic foundations of the Amidon family's harmony singing. The shape note singing revival in New England has grown in size and intensity since the Amidons, Peter and his wife, Mary Alice, started singing it over thirty years ago. Shape note singing started here in New England over two hundred years ago; it is a truly American music form.

Peter Amidon grew up in Monterey. His parents, Dean and Fran Amidon, purchased a new house from Art Hebert (Bob and Linda Hebert's father/father-in-law) in 1953 and moved in with their three young sons, Skip, Peter, and Phillip. A few years later, they welcomed Jay to their Sandisfield Road home on Christmas Eve after his birth at Fairview Hospital. The children all went to Center School, now Mrs. Anderson's kindergarten, but then a one-room schoolhouse with Mrs. Heath teaching second, third, and fourth grades. Mrs. Watson visited Center School offering free piano or violin lessons. Peter was the only one who asked for both, and Mrs. Watson kindly obliged.

Helen Shaw (Judy Hayes' mother) was the visiting phys ed teacher; she had classes in the schoolroom when it was too

cold or rainy outside. "For indoor phys ed, we would usually push our desks to the sides of the room, choose our own partners, and dance to Mrs. Shaw's calling to her own piano playing. I had a little ritual with Heather Keith which we both enjoyed: she would always drag me out from under my desk to be her partner," says Peter.

Peter recalls "the ecstasy of outdoor summer square dances called by 'Wild Bill' Hall at the annual Monterey Firemen's Picnic, and indoor winter square dances called by some guy with an accordion at the Gould Farm Main House after our community Christmas caroling."

At home with the Amidon family, Peter and his brothers sang along with Mitch Miller, following the bouncing ball on TV and singing along with vinyl 33's of Mitch's great songs. "I would make up harmonies and Dad said, 'That's great, Peter.'" Peter moved from Mrs. Watson's public school lessons to more formal lessons on violin, piano, and music theory at the Pittsfield Community Music School; he remembers his mom faithfully driving him there every Saturday morning. He was awarded a scholarship to the six-week Red Fox Music Camp in New Marlborough, a boarding camp for young classical musicians which was run "old school style" by Mrs. Sant'Abrogio, whose son was a cellist in the Boston Symphony. Peter recalls that he was the only local boy among a group of urban, sophisticated youngsters.

Peter's career in music continued in 1975 as an amateur violist da gamba exploring the riches of early music in Cambridge, Massachusetts; he stumbled onto folk music and made a wholesale switch-over to group harmony sing-alongs, contra dancing, Morris dancing, Irish tune sessions, and Sacred Harp singing. Then he met Mary Alice at a contra dance and both were caught up in the wave of traditional music and dance that seemed to be overlapping with the counterculture movement of the 70s. He remembers his first Sacred Harp sing, an informal event in a friend's living room: "I was moved to tears that day by the power of the music and poetry and have never looked back."

Peter and Mary Alice were snapped up by Larry Gordon to join his Vermont-based Word of Mouth Chorus, a group of singers who performed Sacred Harp, Balkan village music, and early European vocal music. With Word of Mouth they went

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on a tour to a traditional southern Sacred Harp singing convention in Alabama in 1977. He notes that although shape note singing had its genesis in New England, it drifted south in the nineteenth century to the southeastern U.S., where it survives to this day. The southern Sacred Harp singers are very proud of their unbroken tradition of singing which traces back to New England singing masters of the late 1700s. The southerners were surprised to see a colorfully painted bus full of enthusiastic young counterculture northerners come rolling in to join them for their two-day Sacred Harp singing convention. As soon as they realized these young people loved their music as much as they did, they greeted them with joyful hospitality and lifelong friendships.

In 1978 and 1980, the Word of Mouth Chorus joined forces with Bread and Puppet Theatre of Vermont for tours of the U.S. and Europe; they did large-scale adult puppet shows set to the singing of a mass by Josquin des Prez and early American shape note songs from the Sacred Harp. Mary Alice and Peter joined with the Word of Mouth Chorus on the classic Nonesuch recording "Rivers of Delight, American Folk Hymns in the Sacred Harp Tradition" and later on several of Larry Gordon's recordings with the Northern Harmony Chorus.

Peter and Mary Alice have two sons, Sam and Stefan, who grew up in a household of music that included frequent Sacred Harp sings in their living room. The boys joined their parents on Larry Gordon's Northern Harmony Chorus European tours and a yearlong Amidon family musical tour of the U.S. and the UK. Sam and Stefan's new professions as versatile young adult musicians reflect the powerful influence of Sacred Harp music. Stefan now leads shape note singing at summer camps and is going on yet another Larry Gordon Northern Harmony Chorus tour in the autumn of 2008. The title track of Sam Amidon's new CD, "All Is Well," is straight from the Sacred Harp. "Sam takes this classic eighteenth century musical meditation on death to a completely new level," says his father.

Monterey residents and others will have a unique opportunity to experience shape note singing at the Bidwell House event on May 31. Peter Amidon leads shape note songs as part of his work as a church choir director and includes the songs in his work with Hospice in a singing group called Hallowell and also in adult harmony singing camps and workshops. Peter is the founder and organizer of thirty years of monthly Sacred Harp sings in Brattleboro, Vermont and has been leading Sacred Harp singing for fifteen years at the Old Songs Festival and the Dance Flurry Festival, both in the Albany, New York, area.

— Martha Dailey

Otis Pool League Forming

The Otis Recreation Commission announces the formation of the Otis Pool League at the Rec Center (Harmony Hall) located at 70 North Main Road, Otis (next to Otis Library).

On Saturday, May 3, 2008, at 1 p.m., the new league will hold its first Open Tournament, with combinations of 8-ball and 9-ball being played for all levels of play, ages 8–88, men, women & kids, on its two top-shape tables, one 4.5 x 9 and one 4 x 8. Bring your own cue or use one of the newly reshaped, reconditioned house cues with cue and objects balls of premium quality. No registration is necessary; the event is free and refreshments will be provided.

Sign up for the new league being formed for all levels of play. If you are interested, please call 413-269-4541 to determine your experience and be matched to your level of play.

The new league is being administered by coordinator Bob Rosen, who resides in Otis. This program is sponsored by the Otis Recreation Commission.

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Wood ducks (photo Stephen Rose).

Audubon Breeding Bird Atlas

In 1974 Massachusetts Audubon started the first breeding bird atlas—the first statewide atlas of its kind on the continent. Last spring, Atlas II began, yielding 208 species and adding many new records of endangered listed birds. A new season is up and running, the second year of this five-consecutive-year study (2007–2011).

I got to thinking: Wouldn't it be great if residents of Monterey, being the supportive community that we are, were to break all records of citizen participation and join in on this valuable and fun conservation project. What is great about the atlas project is that you can join in as a primary contributor of a block (approximately 10 square miles) or you can contribute your observations as an add-on observer, thus optimizing the number of species of breeding birds in each block throughout Monterey and surrounding territory.

Atlas II is unique in being the first breeding bird atlas in which you can enter your data through the Internet. You can see all the data statewide on the site as well. So whether you want to go high tech or low tech, why not join in and make Monterey the most bird savvy town in Massachusetts?

If you wish to contribute, Kenn Basler has agreed that we can keep a sighting list at the Monterey General Store. If you wish to participate, please feel free to call Kate Ryan, 528-4355, or Rene Laubach at Pleasant Valley Sanctuary in Lenox. The web site www.massaudubon.org/birdatlas/bba2 has detailed instructions and the 2007 season results as well.

Let's have fun. Grab your binoculars. Keep your eyes and ears open to all our feathered friends. And you might be the next one to find that rare species breeding right in our community.

— Kate Ryan, 528-4355

Call for Artists!

The Otis Arts Festival will be held on Saturday, August 9, 2008, 9 a.m.–4 p.m., at the Farmington River Elementary School in Otis. The Otis Cultural Council invites local artists and craftspeople to participate in this event as a venue to sell or display their work. The entry fee is $10 and must be paid with application. Applications are available at the Otis Town Hall bulletin board or by emailing otisculturalcouncil@gmail.com or calling 413-269-7232.

Application deadline is June 1, 2008.

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Green Living in Monterey
Green Banners

As part of our continuing series on how Monterey residents are reducing their carbon footprints, I interviewed Maureen and Michael Banner at the home they built in 1988 on Griswold Road.

"It's definitely easier to make a new house green that it is to retrofit an older one," says Michael. "Easier" translates into "cheaper" very quickly. The Banners designed their house from the specs of a pre-cut Acorn. They liked the design and features of this company's "footprints," and were able to make such changes as providing larger windows and better insulation. "If we'd bought an old house," says Michael, "the first thing I would have done is replace the windows."

The Banners sited their house for maximum solar energy. "We put the front on solar south, which is 14 degrees off magnetic south," Michael reports. If you're like me and don't know the difference between solar and magnetic south, here's Michael's "South for Dummies" explanation: The difference between the two "souths" depends on the longitude, which changes as it goes from the equator to the North Pole. A compass tells you where you are in relation to the magnetic field, but determining solar south necessitates refining your location on the globe. Thus, what is solar south for Monterey will differ from, say, solar south in Burlington, Vermont or New York City.

In 2006 the Banners added eight photovoltaic panels to their roof, which produces so much energy that there are summer days when they sell back more electricity to the grid than they use. New rebates and tax credits are being offered for Massachusetts' residents who install photovoltaics this year, so they are considering adding another set of panels in the near future.

The Banners chose to install double-paned high performance windows designed to keep the heat in during winter months and the cool air inside in sticky summer months. The double-paned windows were not expensive, perhaps an additional $500 more than regular ones. But the couple knows they work. "One of the windows was a mistake. It's not high performance, and you always tell which one it is because it's the one that freezes up in the winter," Maureen relates.

Twenty years ago when the Banners built their house, the prevailing theory for environmental compatibility was for a super airtight house. "We used Tyvek to wrap around the house, good windows, improved seals, things like that," says Michael. "But we didn't want a super tight house because when there's no fresh air coming in, it's like being on an airplane. A little fresh air is a very good thing."

Despite their design for insulation efficiency, they occasionally use gas heat or electric air conditioning. Much of their heat during winter months comes from their wood stove, but they also have a gas furnace for really cold spells. "I let the wood stove go out at night," says Michael, "because we like to sleep cold." These days they rely much more on the wood heat than the gas furnace because the days of "cheap gas" are behind us.

On those miserably humid summer days to which the Berkshires are often subjected, the Banners can turn on their air conditioning. And since both of them work at home in their studios, they have units there, too, for occasional use.

Maureen has been an avid gardener for years and now grows much of what they eat in season. She's also an experienced canner and uses her freezer to put by garden excess at the end of the growing season. "I'd like to do more preserving of food but there's just not enough time," she says, echoing sentiments of almost everyone else I know.

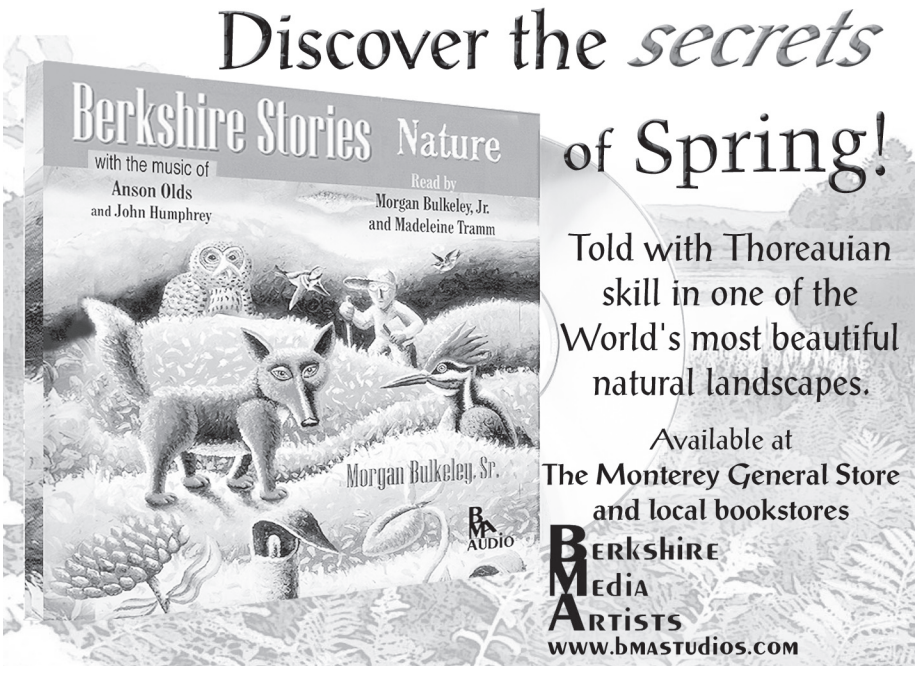
Michael and Maureen created their own ski trails on their property, and frequently clear some on their neighbors' grounds, too. In cleaning up their woods, they stack the brush for animal habitat. Besides wanting to provide housing for small creatures, Maureen says "I don't like burning brush because it stinks."

Like many other Monteruvians, the Banners use LED light bulbs, and joined CET's GreenStart where "we pay more for electricity," as Maureen puts it.

In building their house, Michael says, "We didn't do as much as we wanted to because of money. I wish we had done a masonry fireplace instead of the metal one that costs less." And that's often the rub when it comes to going green. If you can afford the up-front costs, the financial payback is generous, but only over time. The environmental payback, however, starts immediately and lasts a long time.

— Laurily K. Epstein

P.S.: If you would like to share your environmental stories with your neighbors, please write up something and send it to the *Monterey News*. If you don't feel like writing it up, you might call me and I'll help you do so. My number is 528-0577.

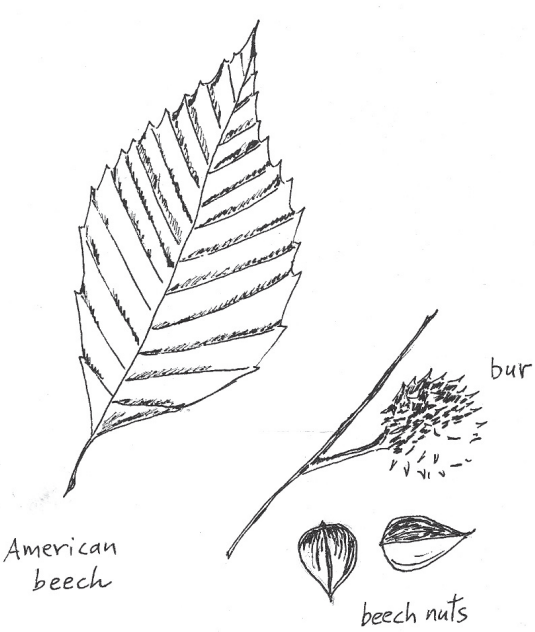


The Beeches: "Most Elegantly Groomed"

May is upon us and flowers are popping out all over, not to mention leaves. Some plants put out flowers first, then leaves. Coltsfoot is like this and so are the red maples. Some wait until the leaves are about to fall and then put out their flowers, but this is rare. Witch hazels do this. Most angiosperms (the flowering plants) do it all at once, and the beeches are of this sort.

Beeches bloom when the leaves are about one-third grown. Around here that is likely to be in early May. If you are not sure what is a beech, look around for a smooth grey trunk and pale leaves from last year still shivering in the breeze. Look for long slim buds, shiny and brown. This is *Fagus grandifolia*, the American beech.

Many beeches all over the northeast are afflicted with a blight called beech bark disease. Like the blight that has removed our American chestnuts from the forest profile, it is the combination of an insect wounding the bark and a fungus moving in. Unlike the chestnuts, though, the beeches often survive to reproductive age and in many areas are completely untouched by the blight. For instance, here in East Monterey we find our north-facing slopes full of sick beeches but the south-facing slopes much healthier. A look at the life cycle of the fungus shows a critical period when the fruiting bodies must be quite wet to develop spores, which are then carried by the wind to the next tree. Maybe the trunks on south-facing slopes are significantly warmed and dried by the sun so the fungus cannot thrive. Or maybe it is a matter of prevailing wind. Maybe for some reason the ladybugs, which prey on the scale insects that wound the trees, favor the south-facing slopes. They certainly favor the south-facing walls of our house.



Julia Ellen Rogers was a brilliant natural scientist who wrote definitive works on trees and shells particularly, which are used in college curricula these days. She wrote some of these works over a hundred years ago. I have a copy of her *The Tree Book,* which belonged to my grandmother, who was also a nature writer. In 1903 when this book was written I am sure there was trouble in the world, but at least the American beeches, which Rogers described as "most elegantly groomed," had no bark blight.

Rogers writes: "We have but one native beech, and it is a clannish tree." By this she means it occurs in groves with many of its offspring nearby. This is the result of dropping its famous beechnuts directly below. Some nuts are carried off by squirrels and jays, but mostly the saplings crop up in the shade of the parent, thriving in places where more sun-seeking species can't grow.

Beeches are monoecious, which means the male and female blossoms occur on the same individual. The staminate (male) blossoms occur in drooping balls on stems, at the base of leafy shoots. They are yellow-green and once their pollen is dispersed, these blossoms drop. Pistillate (female) blossoms grow among the upper leaves on short strong stems. They form fruits (or nuts) by October, two inside each small prickly bur. When the burs split open, the nuts fall. They are unmistakable: triangular, pale brown and shiny.

Rogers gives a detailed description of the opening of the long slim leaf buds, explaining, "It is plain to see that the leaves

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in the opening buds were all made and put away over winter, and they have only to grow. As the shoot lengthens the outer scales fall, and each leaf is seen to have its pair of special attendant scales, each edged with an overhanging fringe. The leaf itself is plaited in fine folds like a fan to fit into the narrow space between the scales. Each rib that radiates from the midrib bears a row of silky hairs which overlap its neighbor's, so that each side of each leaf is amply protected by a furry cover. As the leaf spreads itself it gradually becomes accustomed to the air and the sunshine, and the protecting hairs disappear."

Have we stopped to notice these things lately? Rogers tells us mildly that it is "a sight worth watching. If one has not the time to go to the tree every day in spring he may bring in some lusty twigs, put them in a jar of water in a sunny window, and see the whole process exactly as it happens on the tree."

I did this. I brought in some lusty twigs and they have brightened what was already a splendid spring around here. The buds are lengthening, loosening their scales. They also remind me to "…go to the tree every day," and for this I send out thanks to my pal Julia Ellen Rogers, over the years that have come up between us.

— Bonner J. McAllester

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Lenox Green Living Fair

A Green Living Fair to provide inspiration, education, and activation for all of Berkshire County will be held on Saturday, May 3, from 1–6 p.m. at Lenox Memorial Middle and High School, East Street, Lenox.

Enough doomsday. We've learned the facts about global warming. This Green Living Fair will be a positive celebration of the human spirit and our inherent creativity to meet the challenge before us. It will highlight new ways to think about how we create the future and provide many action steps we can take individually, in our neighborhoods, and in our towns and county. The goal is to create a groundswell of inspired and engaged citizenry participating in solutions that will lead to the Berkshires becoming a model of sustainability.

The day will include presentations, educational workshops leading to personal action, and a vendor fair that will demonstrate many new tools that are available to help us make changes for the good of the planet.

Speakers will include Ben Downing, Massachusetts State Senator, and Ross Robertson, Editor, *What Is Enlightenment?* magazine. There will be a series of short films that will open minds to perspectives that will help motivate us to act. Workshops will include:

- Low Carbon Diet crash course—learn how to loose 5000 lbs of carbon in a month!
- A Bright Green Future—new ways of thinking about how to meet the challenge at hand.
- Solar energy for the home.
- Pesticide reduction at home.
- Composting and water barrels at home.
- Greening your home/small business (given by Topia Inn).
- The low-down on recycling and disposing of everything.

Our "solutions for the future" product fair will highlight many organizations in the Berkshire who will provide immediate opportunities for engagement, as well as a variety of businesses who will showcase and sell products that participants can take home and immediately use. There will be opportunities to tune up your bikes, get the lowdown on solar energy and solar hot-water systems, learn how to keep your lawn up organically, find out how to organize your recycling materials, and much more.

There will be activities for children, food, and music. All middle and high school students in the Berkshires are invited to participate in a poetry contest as well as an art contest called Envision 2050. What will your future look like? For more information on these contests, go to www.townoflenox.com.

The Green Living Fair has been funded, in part, by the New England Grassroots Environmental Fund.

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Spring Ephemerals

Believe it or not this is still early spring. Three weeks of seventy-degree weather can certainly throw off the usual rhythm of the season, but in fact our region's plant life is only just waking up from winter. Is there any more exciting time of year? When the little leaves of the bloodroot start to emerge, and their elegant white flowers pop open, I could swear that I have died and gone to heaven. The time for spring ephemerals has arrived.

The deciduous forests of North America host a lovely display of spring flowers that bloom before the trees' leaves open to shade the ground. The moist, rich soil, created by years of decomposing leaf litter, provides the perfect conditions for these fleeting beauties. Evergreen woodlands have no such bounty because the ground remains shaded and relatively dry beneath the trees throughout the year. Spring ephemerals need the early light to bloom and set seed, and then they appreciate the shade of the tree canopy as they rest up for the next year's adventures.

The single, spotted leaves of the yellow trout lily (*Erythronium americanum*) appear first in my garden under the hemlocks. Most of these leaves are from sterile plants and will not flower, but here and there the double- or triple-leaved flowering variety pops up. The small yellow flower that follows has curved petals turning upward like tiger lilies, hence its common name. What a sight! When the trout lilies start to bloom, the solid green leaves of the Canada mayflower (*Maianthemum canadense*) emerge. The mayflowers spread easily and seem to carpet the ground in great sweeps. They behave much like the trout lilies, sending up mostly single-leaved plants that don't flower. The ones that do bloom will soon have a short stalk of tiny white orbs so small that the stamens protruding from the petals look like legs on a lunar landing craft.

Soon the shoots of the trilliums and the jack-in-the-pulpits (*Arisaema triphyllum*) will start to show under an old highbush blueberry. The trilliums in my garden were a lucky accident. Some years ago a coworker at my last paycheck-type job told me she was leaving a house in Goshen that had at one time been owned by a botanist from the University of Massachusetts. My friend had permission to dig up some of the remaining plants from the original garden, and she invited me to join in. Visions of rare treasures quickly took hold over reality. The garden had long since been rifled through by who knows how many neighbors. Tucked in a corner on the shady side of the house, a small collection of healthy white trilliums survived and now bloom in my garden. I mention this because growing trilliums requires patience—they can take up to seven years to flower from seed! Grow them anyway—the time passes all too quickly. How many wisterias would now grace my arbor if I had been willing to wait the ten years for them to bloom? That was twenty years ago. Never mind. My jack-in-the-pulpits have a more prosaic background. I buy just a few each year because they can be pretty expensive. Some take, some don't. It's a little obsession of mine to have a stand of jack-in-the-pulpits some day, and I keep trying.

So here's the thing. Contemplating spring ephemerals led to an odd realization: since these early bloomers are such a treat, why haven't I grown more of them? There are so many varieties to enjoy in our area. This year I'm determined to add to what nature and previous forays into ephemeral territory have already provided. Among all the choices, there are a few good places to start:

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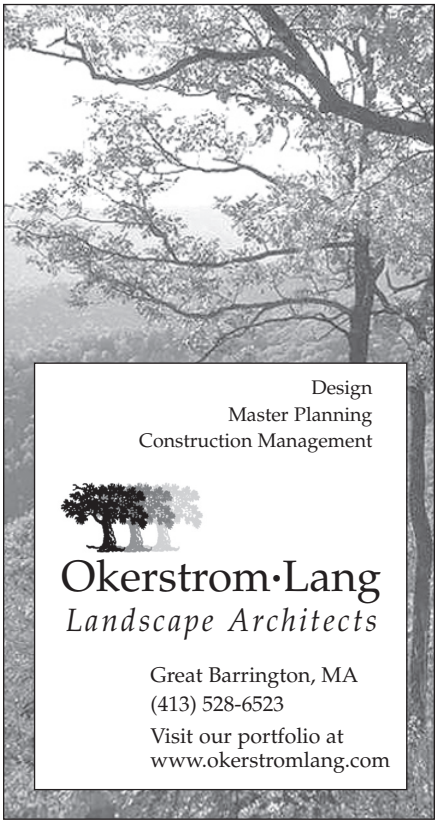


Hepaticas bloom early, sending up little shoots with lavender daisy-like flowers before the plants leaf out. Sharp-lobed hepatica (*Hepatica acutiloba*) is the more commonly grown variety, but it requires a limey soil. Most of us have either mildly or seriously acid soil. The round-lobed type (*Hepatica americana*) may be the better bet. After flowering, the plant shows off its mottled gray-green leaves, which are quite beautiful all by themselves.

For larger bluish-purple flowers, try Virginia bluebells (*Mertensia virginica*). The flowers start out very dark and gradually lighten to a soft blue. These bluebells unfortunately get collected from the wild way too often, so if possible try to find out where the plants you buy have been grown.

Bloodroot (*Sanguinaria*) comes in the single-flowered and double-flowered varieties. Both are very long-lived and spread to create impressive stands. The double-flowering bloodroot bears amazingly opulent blooms for such a small plant. The single-flowering type has more fragrance.

Jack-in-the-pulpits (*Arisaema*) have any number of varieties worth trying, all of which display that fantastic hooded flower called a spathe. Green dragon (*Arisaema draconitum*) sports a long coiling hood and grows to three feet high. The Asian variety (*Arisaema sikkonianum*) has a stunning white center in the spathe. And our native type (*Arisaema triphyllum*) can be found with many variations in flower stripes and colors, all of them fun to grow and show off to the children in your family.

In the bulb department, the cultivated trout lilies (*Erythronium*) really stand out. Also called dogtooth lilies because of the shape of the tuber, trout lily flowers range in color from sulphur yellow to pure white. Once established they form clumps of variegated foliage with many 6–12 inch flower stems.

Shooting stars (*Dodecathon*) love spring moisture and mix well with the Virginia bluebells. The flowers bloom in shades of light to dark pink. For eastern gardens the Amethyst shooting star and the Eastern shooting star make good choices, but all the varieties are worth a try.

Spring ephemerals are a great way to extend the growing season. They can be easily tucked into the garden around the larger and later plants. Hostas especially provide great cover over any bare spots left by dormant spring bloomers. Ligularias, especially the large-leaved varieties, and ferns also work well to fill in any gaps. And the ephemerals look gorgeous when planted in drifts in woodland settings, with or without the later cover plants. Wherever you put them, they will make your early spring a special occasion.

ॐ

Sources of Spring Ephemerals

Arrowhead Alpines, Fowlerville, Michigan, www.arrowheadalpines.com.

Bluestone Perennials, Madison, Ohio, www.bluestoneperennials.com.

McClure & Zimmerman Bulbs, Friesland, Wisconsin, www.mzbulb.com.

New England Wildflower Society, Framingham, Massachusetts, www.newfs.org. Plants sold from greenhouses in Framingham and Whately.

Project Native, Housatonic, Massachusetts, www.projectnative.org.

Ward's Nursery, Great Barrington, and our other local nurseries.

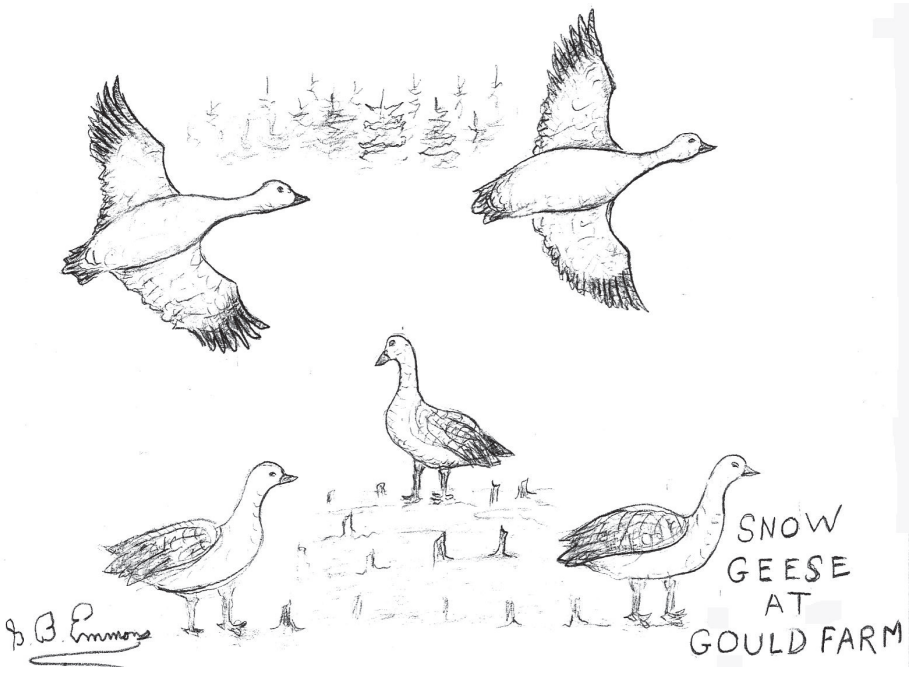
Suggested Reading

Cullina, William. *The New England Wildflower Society Guide to Growing and Propagating Wildflowers of the United States and Canada*. Houghton Mifflin, 2000. The best source book on the subject, and an entertaining read as well.

De Grey, Joan. "Woodland Beauties," in *The American Gardener,* March/April 2008.

Moore, J. Paul. "Tiny Blooming Treasures," in *Fine Gardening,* March/April 1999.

— Ruth Green



Orion and the Snow Geese

There is an aura of mystery about the spring migrations like the early arrival of robins on wings of the vernal equinox, whose wonder is written in the stars. Then on Wednesday April 2, the silence of the chilled blue sky of early morning was broken by the shrill clarion of a flock of snow geese coasting down the sky to land in a Gould Farm field. There was rubbernecking from car windows along Curtis Road and Route 23 on the way to the transfer station, but then the significance of the spectacle probably drove away with those who had completed their weekly environmental recycling duty.

The snow goose is a North American species with typically white plumage except for black wingtips and tail that breeds in the northern tip of Canada and Siberia, coming from as far south as Mexico. Although their visit to Monterey is noteworthy, a hundred years ago large clouds of them annually whitened the skies and fields all along the Houatonic River Valley flyway. Who and what is to blame for the decline in numbers may be part of a decimation similar to that of the passenger pigeon, but today their numbers are coming back with the reestablishment of nesting areas by conservation groups..

When their calling in spring announces the change of seasons their song is for many no less moving than the "Halleluiah Chorus" of Handel's *Messiah*. If it is also the music of the spheres, perhaps it has a cause and effect from the heavens most interestingly associated with Greek mythology and the most conspicuous constellation, Orion the hunter, represented by the figure of a man with the row of three stars forming his belt and below the stars of his sword. He lords over the heavens from late autumn to early spring, and in order to get his way he threatened to destroy all wildlife on Earth. So the arrival of snow geese in spring is a celebration of another seasonal renewal and the reincarnation of life itself.

— George B. Emmons

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BTF Benefit for Student Scholarships

On Saturday, May 3, from 8 to 11 p.m. at Firefly in Lenox, Berkshire Theatre Festival will host the third annual benefit to raise funds for the Richie duPont Award: scholarships for creative and talented local students to attend BTF PLAYS! summer acting camps. The event is held in memory of a young actor who made his way from a Berkshire elementary school to the BTF Main Stage, and over two years it has provided six deserving students with the opportunity to attend BTF PLAYS! camps.

This year's benefit will feature live entertainment, as well as door prizes and a silent auction. Local contributors to the auction include Berkshire Bike & Board, Chocolate Springs, IS183, Karen Allen Fiber Arts, Kripalu, Pine Cone Hill, The Red Lion Inn, Rhythms, Route 7 Grill, and Shooz.

Firefly is located at 71 Church St. in Lenox. Tickets are $15 in advance and $20 at the door. All donations are tax deductible. To purchase tickets or for more information call 413-298-5536 ext. 13. For more information on Berkshire Theatre Festival visit www.berkshiretheatre.org.

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Sat: 7:30 am–6:00 pm
Sunday, 8:00–11:00 am

A Lesson in Defeat

As the snappy moderator asked me my seventh question of the preliminary round, I stood up quickly and confidently, my appearance masking how I actually felt. The best adjectives to describe me at that moment are woozy and drained. I had barely slept the night before due to a bad fever, and with an onslaught of stomach pains, I was suffering an ill-timed bout of sickness. As she asked me the question, "Which country on the Adriatic Sea is the only European country with a Muslim majority?" my normally stable mind began to race wildly. My panicked, flustered brain reverted to grasping at straws; I lost my sense of geography and logic, and nonsensically blurted out, "Serbia" (it does not even border the Adriatic). The moderator replied callously, "No! It's Albania." My face turned red, and I sat down gloomily, tearing up my costly gaffe inside my head. I got the next question correct, but my 7/8 final preliminary mark spelled the end of my geography bee experience.

That was April fourth. To this day I still feel a painful, stinging sense of failure. In my final year of eligibility, I had failed to meet my potential by missing out on a question I knew. Suffice to say, I was very upset in the immediate aftermath of the bee. I childishly tried to explain my mistake and ended up swimming in excuses. For approximately one hour after my exit, I wallowed in self-pity, endlessly rehashing that one question and the endless ways I could have conquered it (asking for a repeat, using all of my time, calming myself, using a mental map, etc.). This only intensified my sickly state (which, I assumed erroneously, was a prime factor in my loss).

My final finish was nineteenth, down from sixth the year before. While my score would have been good for a finals berth last year, this year the number of perfect scores doubled, and 40 percent of all competitors made at least 7/8, an increase from 27 percent the previous year. Yes, the bee was more competitive, but I soon realized that my moaning was missing the point. Although the bee is sometimes unfair and frustrating, preparation for it and competition in it provided me with hours of fun and learning. While the Albania question will remain forever ingrained in my mind, so will the happy moments of the bee, and most importantly, my knowledge of geography that it has generously facilitated. Writing this short piece has certainly brought back painful memories, but it has also assisted my liberation from their chains.

— Jonah Carlson

BTF Audition Call for *Oliver!*

Berkshire Theatre Festival seeks both child and adult actors, backstage crew, technical support, and usher staff to participate in its upcoming community production of the musical *Oliver!*, book, music and lyrics by Lionel Bart, based on Charles Dickens's *Oliver Twist,* to be directed by E. Gray Simons III and Travis Daly. These roles and positions are open to members of the Berkshire community, third grade through adults. Rehearsals will begin in late July, with performances on September 4–7 at BTF's Main Stage in Stockbridge.

Proceeds from the production will benefit Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation's Berkshire County Educational Enrichment Initiative and BTF PLAYS!, Berkshire Theatre Festival's Year-Round Education Program. Funding provided by BTF sponsors will cover the theatre's direct production costs.

Auditions will take place on Thursday, May 1, from 5 to 9 p.m., Friday, May 2, from 5 to 9 p.m., and Saturday, May 3, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at BTF's Unicorn Theatre (Rt. 7 in Stockbridge).

Student auditions will be held during the first three hours of each session and the last hour will be for adults. Adults should be prepared to sing 16 bars of a song and bring the accompanying sheet music in the key in which they prefer to sing. Students will learn a song at the audition. Callbacks will take place the following week as needed.

To schedule an audition slot or for further information, call the *Oliver!* Hotline at 413-298-5536 ext. 23.

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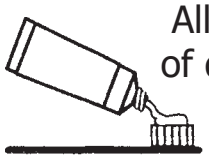
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Regarding the Boat Ramp

Dear Neighbors,

In December 2007 our family purchased Kinne's Grove. We had been renting on the lake for the previous five years and, like most of you, fell in love. Last summer we were approached by several individuals requesting use of the boat ramp and were able to oblige. However, that will not be the case this year. Unfortunately, due to the insurance risk we were advised to remove the ramp and there is no longer boat access on the property. We are dependent on the launch at the beach just as everyone else is, and understand the community's concern and hope that a solution is found in the near future.

— The Mandelbaums

Thanks to Monterey Firemen

To the Editor:

On April 11th the carbon monoxide alarm started ringing in our house. We are so lucky to have the Monterey Fire Department!!

Chief Tryon and his volunteer crew arrived, fire truck and all, and were a huge help. I know these men leave their work anytime to respond to a 911 call and are a professional, dedicated, and very generous group of men. They are the best!

(As it turned out, our lack of hot water alerted All Seasons to realize the burner was off, which caused the alarm to ring in the first place.)

Aaron and I are so fortunate to be Monterey residents. Just wanted to publicly compliment our fire department for always being there for us.

— Lynne and Aaron Leavitt

CATA's 15th Anniversary

Community Access to the Arts will present its fifteenth anniversary performance at the Founders' Theatre in Lenox on Saturday, May 3, at 6 p.m. and Sunday, May 4, at 1 p.m. The annual performance weekend is the organization's largest fundraiser. CATA's mission is to nurture and celebrate the creativity of people with disabilities through shared experiences in the visual and performing arts. For information, call 413-528-5485.

Remembering James Alan Bogdanoff

James Alan Bogdanoff ("Jamie") of Old Tappan, New Jersey, and Monterey died on February 29, 2008, after a four-and-a half-month battle with esophageal cancer. He was 47.

Born and raised in Greenwich Village, New York City, Jamie was a lifelong summer resident of Sylvan Road in Monterey. He avidly fished in and around Lake Garfield, the Konkapot, and the Housatonic. Even more than the fishing, he cherished his Berkshire friends with whom he spent countless hours from childhood forward catching frogs, toads, and salamanders; boating and skiing on the lake; visiting on Lads Beach; talking about sports; playing in the Sunday morning basketball game; and, of course, fishing. At his funeral, pallbearers and speakers included Lake Garfield friends Greg Carnese, Chris Carnese, Randy Gelbard, Scott Jervas, David Panush, and Frank Rotundo, in addition to former colleagues Diane Sawyer, Deborah Norville, and Scott Rapoport.

When Jamie was not "in the country," he had another life working in television. At the time of his death, he was senior producer of *Good Morning America* for ABC News, where he had started his career in the film library in 1983. In the intervening years, he produced news and feature stories for a variety of syndicated and national broadcasts, including tabloids *A Current Affair* and *Inside Edition*. Last summer, he was delighted to find that his Blackberry worked on Sylvan Road, freeing him from trips to the Tyringham Valley to check breaking news messages; he purchased a new bike to take full advantage of this newfangled technology ... which gave him more time to fish.

Jamie was a graduate of Friends Seminary in New York City and Clark University, Worcester, Massachusetts. He is survived by his mother, Phyllis Sweed Bogdanoff, of Sylvan Road and New York; his wife, Robin Messing Bogdanoff, and their daughter, Phoebe Laurel Bogdanoff, of Sylvan Road and Old Tappan, New Jersey; and his nephews, Justin Romano (Kelly) and Russell Romano, in addition to numerous other relations and friends. He was predeceased by his father, Leonard Bogdanoff, and his sister, Patricia Bogdanoff Romano.

An endowed fellowship is being established in Jamie's memory at Clark University. In addition, family and friends have created a "Team Jamie" to participate in the American Cancer Society's Relay for Life on June 13–14, 2008, in Old Tappan, N.J. Additional information is available at the "JamesBogdanoff" page at www.CaringBridge.org.

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Calendar

Thursday, May 1: SBRSD School Committee meeting, Monterey School, 6 p.m. Everyone invited; future of Monterey School will be discussed.

Saturday, May 3:

Annual Town Meeting and Election beginning at 9:15 a.m., Monterey Firehouse.

Gould Farm Gala, Crissey Farm, Great Barrington. Information 528-1804.

Green Living Fair, Lenox High School, 1–6 p.m. See p. 17.

Workshop on American Soldiers at War, 9:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m., Austin Riggs Center, Stockbridge. $25; information 413-584-8635.

Free bead stringing and jewelry design workshop, a.m.– 2 p.m., Otis Town Hall conference center. Reservations required. Children 10 and older welcome when accompanied by adult. Call 413-429-6627.

Open Pool Tournament, 1 p.m., Otis Recreation Center (next to Library). See p. 13.

Thursday, May 8: Free Blood Pressure Clinic, 2 p.m., Monterey Town Hall.

Saturday, May 10: Poetry Slam, Monterey Library, 7 p.m. See p. 5.

Tuesday, May 13: Free Health Screening, Community Health Program, 10 a.m., Town Hall.

Wednesday, May 14: Community Potluck Dinner, 6 p.m. Monterey Meetinghouse Fellowship Hall, 6 p.m. After-dinner talk on local potash history. See p. 9.

Friday, May 16: Tea Room opens at Monterey General store, 9 a.m. See p. 5.

Tuesday, May 20: Educational forum on Community Preservation Act, hosted by Monterey Preservation Land Trust, 7 p.m., Town Hall. See p. 6.

Friday, May 23: Lecture by bird expert Rich Guthrie, 7 p.m., Monterey Meetinghose. See p. 7.

Saturday, May 24:

Morning birding hike led by Rich Guthrie. Preregistration required; call Joe Baker, 528-5134. see p. 7.

Square and contra dancing, 8:30–11:30 p.m., Dewey Hall, Rt. 7, Sheffield. Music by Mountain Laurel. Caller Fern Bradley. All dances are taught; beginners and children are welcome. Adults $8–10, children $5. Information 528-9385.

Monday, May 26: Memorial Day: Observance to honor veterans, 11 a.m., Veterans Memorial Park. Parade through town center, 1 p.m.

Saturday, May 31:

Early New England Music Concert, Monterey Meetinghouse. Singing workshop led by Peter Amidon at 2 p.m., concert at 4 p.m. See p. 12.

"Grandma, Vaudeville, & Me," performance for children by storyteller and dancer Bob Thomas, 11 a.m. Farmington River Elementary School, Otis.

Sunday, June 1: Friends of Lake Garfield meeting, 9:30 a.m., Firehouse.

The Observer
March 26–April 25

High temp. (4/19)	80°
Low temp. (3/30)	12°
Snowfall	0.8 in.
Total precipitation (rain and melted snow)	2.42 in.

Rainfall occurred on 11 days.

Correction: The April *News* incorrectly reported the total precipitation for the period Feb. 26–March 25 as 1.54 in. The actual total precipitation was 6.4 in.

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Contributions from local artists this month:
Rachel Arnow, p. 9; George Emmons, p. 20;
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